

Presentation of our Issue 6, number 11

“Language and power **relations**”

It is estimated that there are around 7,000 languages in the world. Only some of them have the status of being official languages and others are international languages. Many times, their status is linked to economic or political factors. In other cases, it is due to the colonizing inheritance. Those languages that do not enjoy a high status end up having limited spaces for their use or perishing if they cease to be transmitted to subsequent generations of speakers. This phenomenon occurs in all latitudes of the world. In the particular case of Our America, we can find this problematic with the indigenous languages and, although less visible, but with the same importance, with the Creole languages. For the readers of our magazine, in number 11 of this publication, we present a varied discussion about some practices of languages and their interactions with others. There are historical studies on the subversive power and resistance of indigenous languages, pedagogical proposals to maintain and revitalize them, strategic approaches to decolonization of thought and knowledge, analyses of the relationship between language, power and identity, and reflections on the situation of other languages that coexist in multilingual areas such as Creole and the difficulties and prejudices they face because they do not have a high status.

From Venezuela, Esteban Emilio Mosonyi presents an experience about patois in the article that appears in the section of Militant Academy: **About a doctoral thesis on the "patois de Güiría", Venezuela.** The author describes the case of a speaker who, having been born in Venezuela and having learned two languages at home, developed a trilingualism situation: patois (or Creole French from the Caribbean island of Santa Lucía), Spanish and English. This case is striking because of the similarity of patois with that of indigenous languages, relegated to a use that is almost forbidden because it lacks an official status. In addition, the author explains how in the imaginary of some societies they have ingrained ideas about how harmful these languages could be in the cognitive development of those who learn them at an early age and because these ideas these languages are no longer transmitted to new generations. However, there also seems to be a recent change in the domestic or social multilingualism that is supported by some government policies, perhaps still with some limitations that could surely be overcome with concrete experiences of linguistic strengthening. Finally, the author gives an account of the origins of this Creole language of the Caribbean island, the relationship that keeps or not with African languages, the cultural influences that have permeated it, and even the appropriation of the term creolity by Venezuelans to self-nominate themselves as criollos.

Before moving on to our dossier, which is dedicated to the relationships that exist in the different languages in terms of crossbreeding and power, we offer two conferences in our section "Conferences and interviews" which were held during 2017. The first is called **Machismo kills, discrimination kills, inequality kills. Contributions to the denunciation and debate on the**

serious situation of femicide in Argentina. A look from the migrant women that was presented in July at the hearing of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). In this conference, the speakers, Silvia Romero and Ana Téllez Luque talk about the urgency of changing the ways of relating to women. The second conference is given by Francesca Gargallo Celentani and is entitled **Feminisms and women's policies on the horizon of ending the patriarchal mandates of violence**. Gargallo's conference was held in the context of a few days at the Universidad Nacional del Sur, Bahía Blanca, Argentina, in September of the year mentioned above.

As for the content of the Dossier, we open with Tesiu Rosas Xelhuanzi. In his article, **Language colonization and Nahua decolonial subversion in the sixteenth century**, the author makes a historical journey from the publication of the Castilian Grammar of Elio Antonio de Nebrija in the late fifteenth century to the annotations collected in various texts around the sixteenth century. The author gives an account of the Spanish crown's intentions to extend its empire to the Americas by means of, in the author's words, "a project of colonization of the language that would accompany the earthly and spiritual conquest". The strategy was to teach Spanish to the Indians; however, it did not prosper. Instead, conversion to Christianity was sought but linguistic diversity represented a barrier. Being the conversion of indigenous people to Christianity a priority for the crown, the strategy was to take advantage of the existence of languages that were very expanded and consolidated prior to the arrival of the Spaniards and they used them as lingua franca to transmit the Christian message, especially in Nahuatl. In the midst of this process of language use, the Colegio de Tlatelolco emerges where it is promoted that the so-called Indians learn Latin and Castilian to be active agents in evangelization and at the same time they be trained as civil servants to occupy local governments; part of this formation would be in Latin. The author describes the benefits that this strategy of religious formation of the Indians brought to the crown. However, having been trained in colonial languages gave the Nahua speakers access to the knowledge of Roman law that allowed them to defend themselves from abuse and to demand rights that corresponded to them. The author concludes with some reflections on the implications of the appropriation of Western models to claim themselves as "autonomous and active intellectuals".

Following the line of indigenous languages, in the article **Nikan ka tlapowalistli: stories from here. Traditional short stories as an emerging pedagogy for a bilingual intercultural education in Tepetzintla, Veracruz.**, by Jazmín Nallely Argüelles Santiago, the author describes the displacement of the Nahuatl language in a town in Veracruz, Mexico. The origin of this phenomenon lies in the growing use of Spanish in the daily activities of the inhabitants of that place, and in the lack of spaces in public media and institutions. In addition, the Nahuatl language is spoken mainly by older people and adults, and to a lesser extent by young parents, adolescents and children. This seems to represent a gradual loss of this language. Thus, as a way to remedy this situation, the project "Nikan ka tlapowalistli. Stories from here" has sought to promote language learning and preservation among children through the

implementation of workshops to create stories in Nahuatl. The project involved different subjects such as parents, teachers, indigenous experts, local authorities and elementary school children. Part of the project involved agreeing on activity plans, conducting interviews with older people for knowledge recovery and selecting the information that would serve as the basis for writing the stories. The stories, as final products, have been intended to be used as didactic material for teaching and learning Nahuatl. It is important to highlight that the foundations of these stories have philosophical principles such as the relationship between living beings, the origin of corn, dances, festivals, conquest and domination, rituals, among others. Finally, in addition to the objective of revitalizing the language, this initiative aims to strengthen the identity of the people and awaken appreciation for the linguistic diversity of the region.

We know that the Nahua were one of the largest peoples in the Mexican territory before the Spanish conquest. This has been widely discussed by different experts and the work continues as exemplified by the two papers already mentioned in this issue of the journal.

To expand the range of works on other languages, in her article **Narrative and wixárika art in the process of decolonization: a claim by Wirikuta** Lucia Agraz Rubin puts at the center of the discussion the potential that narratives and the art of different indigenous peoples can have as a subversive form against the Western thought and activities that threaten sacred territories and culture such as the Wirikuta of the Wixárika (huicholes). In the author's words, her work is developed "from a cognitive perspective of the enactivity between the Wixárika cosmology presented in their narrative and their co-determination with the sacred territory of Wirikuta". As discussed in this article, the Wixárika people conceive man as a species and all the elements of nature in an interrelated manner and not in a fragmented way as from the Western perspective. From this conception, the author questions the superiority of Western epistemology over that of a people like the Wixárika, pointing out that colonial discourse serves to fragment interrelated elements and exercise domination. This is why it is intended to take up the wisdom contained in their narratives and art to reformulate concepts such as knowledge, truth, ethics and politics in a world where colonial discourse prevails.

At present, a concern is to maintain a dynamic development of indigenous languages; however, there are factors that make this task difficult and rarely visible in the literature. Thus, Gregorio Hernández Zamora, in his article **Literacy and Indigenous languages in Mexico: From saying to doing**, puts the reality of languages in Mexico into perspective by disambiguating terms such as language and dialect and by pointing out the current number of native languages of this country. Although it is recognized that there is a significant number of languages, they lack a writing system that confines them to oral use only. This leads the author to question the origin of this fact and suggests three great causes: historical, linguistic and educational. Historically, languages did not have a writing system. There were some, such as the Maya, which developed ideographic writing; however, they were not commonly used by the entire population, which could explain why today most indigenous languages lack a writing system. In addition, there are difficulties in determining a standardized script because

of the number of variants of the same language. Likewise, the educational sphere, especially the so-called bilingual education, does not seem to contribute with the necessary conditions for the development of indigenous languages. Although there is a formal regulatory framework for this, the reality is different. The author concludes with reflections on the promotion of the use of languages in different spaces and emphasizes the need to create a culture that recognizes the multilingual reality of the country.

In Mexico, the linguistic situation is complex: Spanish is the official language, 68 indigenous languages are spoken and English is taught as a foreign language from basic to higher education. Learning English can create difficulties not only in terms of language, but also in terms of power and identity for many students. In this issue of the magazine, Colette Despagne in her article **Language, Power, and Identity in Learning English: the Case of Students from the Sierra Norte de Puebla** shows the factors that contribute to the challenges of indigenous and mestizo students who have received scholarships for learning English and to their commitment to autonomous strategies (such as building imagined communities) during their university stay based on their deep-rooted beliefs and a change of perceptions of themselves. This is based on the colonial legacies, modernity and colonality of power that intervene in the acquisition of English. The research is framed in the area of applied linguistics (critical) and post-colonial theories to understand the socio-historical context in which students are placed when learning English, and to question the power relations and inequalities between languages and cultures in Mexico. This is a critical ethnographic case study where sociolinguistic, political, historical and cultural aspects converge. The techniques used were observation and one-year interviews, and information was compiled to analyze it. It was concluded that students' perceptions of the English language are deeply rooted in Mexico's colonial legacies, deriving unequal cultural and linguistic power relations between the languages and cultures of this group.

We change the context of indigenous languages in Mexico to get closer to other linguistic realities. In this way, the article **The myth of mixed language and French-Caribbean creoles**, by Paola C. Carrión González, seeks to clarify the current situation of mixed and Creole languages, based on a methodological overview of lexicographical and sociological works, and the problems they face compared to other languages when considering the historical, linguistic, geographical, political, economic, ecological and sociological levels. The influence of languages better positioned by speakers according to the territory, the number of speakers and the diglossia generate limitations of their survival. That is why the importance lies in the strata as defining elements. Although bilingual dictionaries exist, Creole languages are faced with two important situations: the lack of monolingual lexicographic resources and diglossia, so they still do not have an official language status in front of the French language.

Continuing the edition, we open the section of free articles. We offer a research that presents the analysis and reflection of a popular story. It is interesting how its author, Graciela Hernández, glimpses the power relations associated with women and how some abusive

behaviors are naturalized. The article is entitled **The Shepherdess and the Condor: From the antagonisms between nature and culture to gender antagonisms.**

The second free article of this edition is **Encontro Nacional de Estudantes Indígenas no Brasil: reflexões compartilhadas** and is written by Michele Barcelos Doebber, Angélica Domingos and Ivanilde da Silva. This work is a systematization of the experience of the National Meeting of Indigenous Students (NMIS) in Brazil, which is a series of encounters that have been questioning coloniality since 2013. The work arises from the experience of the meetings and the theoretical documentation.

From Mexico we find a work on Human Rights and Indigenous Peoples presented by Ana Luisa Guerrero of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). In **Ethical-political reflections on the collective rights of indigenous peoples**, the author raises the need to review the ethical-political implications of the international recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples.

The article that closes this section is **The Problem of the Philosophies of the Original Peoples. An approach from the philosophy of liberation**, presented by Jorge Reyes López. The author approaches the disarmament of the Eurocentric gaze that denies philosophy outside Western thought. It is a philosophical work that speaks of the urgency of a critical-liberating philosophy. Finally, regarding the material we offer, we deliver two book reviews. The first one, **Dignifying history, volume II. The National Liberation Forces and the combats for memory (1974-1977). 2016. Apodaca, Nuevo León, Mexico: Editorial Group of La Casa de Todas y Todos. 135 p.** has been written by Luis Rodríguez Castillo and deals with a work in the context of a series of books called "Cuadernos de Trabajo. Dignifying History ". The second review was written by Abdiel Rodríguez Reyes and is titled **Cerutti Guldberg, Horacio. 2015. Enabling another trans-capitalist life. Mexico: UNAM / CIALC / Universidad del Cauca. pp. 197.** It is a book created from a series of lectures that the liberation philosopher made in Argentina. Both reviews are a very complete tool to approach the works that we review in this issue.

This volume has compiled works having as a main objective to contribute from the academic, epistemological and political work to the transformation of the practice in different areas. In this issue, we have addressed the issue of languages and the phenomena that occur around them. Although we could find that languages can be instruments of empowerment and resistance that allow us to transform the realities of their speakers and that linguistic diversity has been recognized in some countries of Our America, the creation of spaces where these languages become visible and be on par with colonial languages by giving them equal status is still pending. We know and understand that this is not an easy task, nor the task of a few subjects. This commits us all to contribute from our areas to have fairer and freer societies.

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